

JOHN COLLINS WARREN

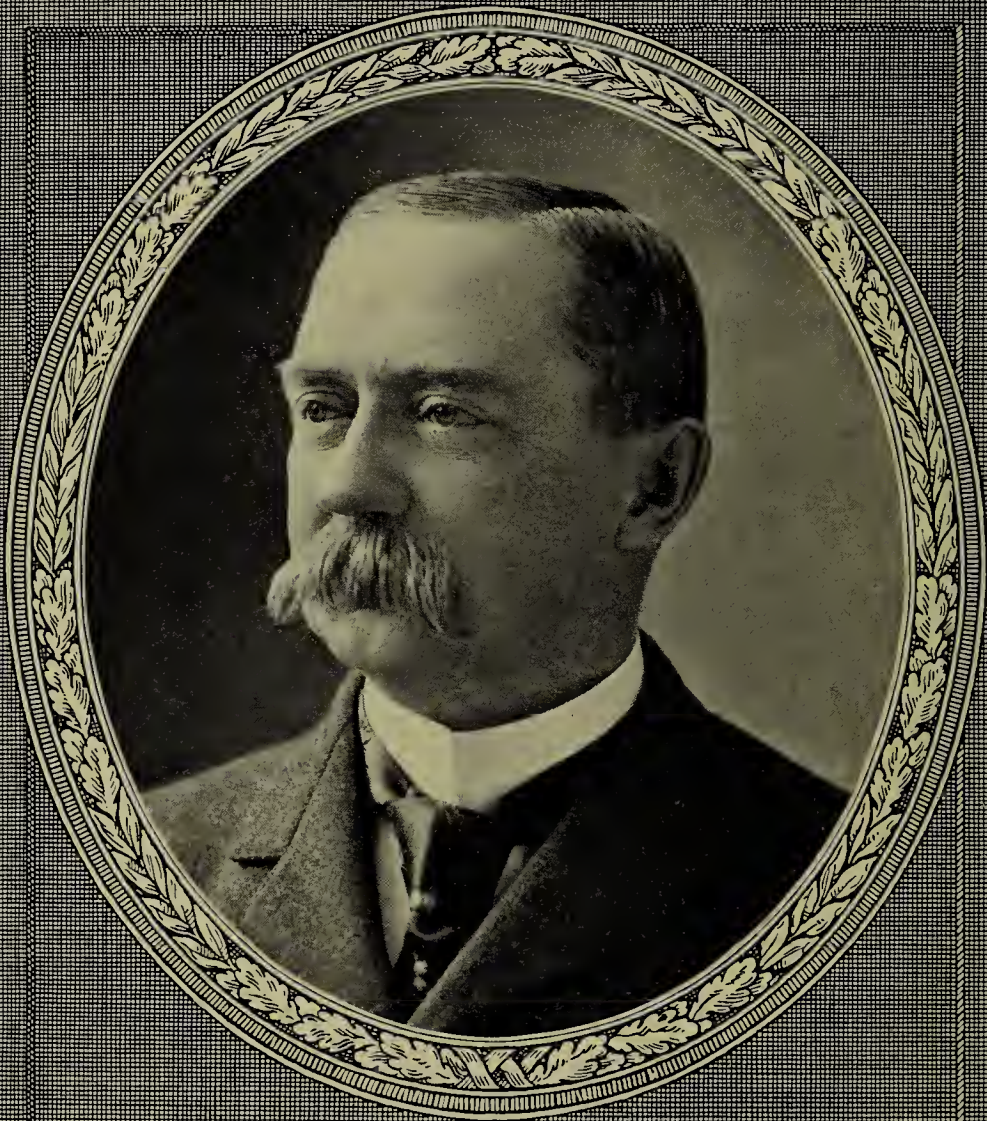
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1842-1927

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ON the third day of November, 1927, there died in Boston, Massachusetts, a surgeon, whose life and whose works were of such a character as to entitle his memory to far more than ordinary consideration and respect. This surgeon was Dr. John Collins Warren.

He came of distinguished ancestry, and belonged to a line of eminent doctors of five successive generations, reaching far back to Revolutionary times:

1. His great-grandfather, Dr. John Warren (1753-1815)—younger brother of General Joseph Warren (also a doctor), who at the head of the American forces, fell at Bunker Hill—was a hospital surgeon in the Revolutionary Army, and was the first professor of anatomy and surgery in Harvard College. He was one of the founders of the Harvard Medical School, and also of the Massachusetts Medical Society. He was furthermore a prominent citizen deeply interested in public affairs.

2. His grandfather, Dr. John C. Warren (1778-1856), was also in turn professor of anatomy and surgery at Harvard, and with Dr. James Jackson, took an active part in the founding of the Massachusetts General Hospital, which was first opened in 1821. He it was, who at the hospital in 1846, gave the first public demonstration of the use of ether as a surgical anæsthetic—removal of a tumor of the neck—Dr. William T. G. Morton himself being the anæsthetist.

3. His father, Dr. Jonathan Mason Warren (1811-1867), was one of the surgeons at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and he also took a prominent part in the surgery of his time in Boston.

4. Dr. John Collins Warren, was of the next generation; and following him came:

5. His son, Dr. John Warren, who was associate professor of anatomy at Harvard, and also University marshal from 1911 until the day of his death, July 17, 1928.

The subject of this sketch, Dr. John Collins Warren—or, as he was in the habit of writing his name, "J. Collins Warren,"—was born in Boston, May 4, 1842; and was the son of Dr. Jonathan Mason Warren, as already related, and his wife Annie (Crowninshield) Warren.

John Collins Warren acquired his early education at the Boston Latin School,

and later attended a private school in the same city. He graduated from Harvard College in 1863; from the Harvard Medical School in 1866; and then, after taking a course at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, continued his studies in Europe for about 3 years,—principally in London and Edinburgh, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.

On his return to Boston he at once began the practice of his profession, and was soon appointed surgeon to out-patients at the Massachusetts General Hospital. He served in that institution for 36 years, being promoted from one grade to a higher one until finally he became senior visiting surgeon.

Being desirous of teaching as well as practicing surgery, he fortunately soon received an appointment as instructor at the Harvard Medical School, and thereafter he was rapidly advanced through the various grades until he became Moseley professor of surgery, finally retiring with the title of professor emeritus. His wide experience both in the practice of surgery and in teaching, naturally increasing as time went on, added greatly to his efficiency in both of these directions. His private practice and his consultations, also grew in accordance.

He was a prolific writer on many different surgical subjects. One of his earliest successes in this respect was the winning of the prize in 1872 for his Boylston medical essay on "Rodent Ulcer." Throughout his professional life he was always intensely interested in surgical pathology, and he was one of the first in this country to employ systematically the microscopic examination of pathological material removed at operation. Everything relating to malignant tumors particularly appealed to him, and he wrote many papers on this subject. In 1895 he published a book entitled *Surgical Pathology and Therapeutics*, embodying the most approved ideas of that time. This book has been called "his most notable literary accomplishment." Later he contributed the chapter on "Surgical Pathology" in Keen's *American Text-Book of Surgery*; still later, with Pearce Gould, the well-known English surgeon, he became co-editor, and in part author, of the *International Text Book of Surgery*, which was published in two volumes. For a number of years he was also editor of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*.

He was a Member of the American Surgical Association, and, at one time, President; he was one of five upon whom honorary fellowships were conferred by the American College of Surgeons at its first meeting; he was a member of the American Medical Association, of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. He was also chairman of the Harvard Cancer Commission for nearly 25 years. For more than 12 years he was also president of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

He had unbounded faith in the unusual opportunities in Boston for the extensive development of medical teaching and research, and a large part of what has been accomplished in this direction was due to him. He was always

intensely interested in the welfare of the Harvard Medical School, and was ever ready to help it in every way possible; and his work for the School, continued over many years, was unremitting and of enormous benefit. He, with Dr. Henry P. Bowditch, not only originated the ideas upon which the plant of the present Harvard Medical School was planned, but together they did notable work in securing the necessary funds for carrying their ideas into effect, and in attracting to the vicinity a number of hospitals and other institutions allied in one way or another to medicine, and thus developed what up to that time was new and was much needed in Boston—a great Medical Center. This result was largely due to Dr. Warren's persistent exertions, and to his firm conviction as to the worthiness of his cause. To him also belonged the credit for making it possible to build the Collis P. Huntington Memorial Hospital, and to equip it for work in the study and treatment of cancer. He moreover directed his efforts toward securing for medical students suitable dormitory accommodations; and, before he died, he had the satisfaction of knowing that this dream had become true in the building of Vanderbilt Hall.

He was awarded an Honorary LL.D from Jefferson Medical College (in 1895) and later, the same from Harvard, and also from McGill. In 1900 he received the honorary degree of fellowship in the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and somewhat later a similar honorary degree in the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

As might be expected, Dr. Warren had also many interests outside of medicine; among them being the Massachusetts Historical Society, to which, by will, he left forty-six volumes of the papers of the Warren family for five generations (from Revolutionary times). He was also a member and past president of the Bunker Hill Monument Association, and of the Humane Society of Massachusetts, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. From 1908 to 1914 he was an Overseer of Harvard University.

Such is a mere outline of the life and activities of the man, who did such memorable service for Harvard University, for the Harvard Medical School, and for medicine and surgery. It has been said of him by an intimate friend, most competent to judge, that he was one of the few men whose background and foreground were in perfect accord; for, not only did he belong to a distinguished family, but what he himself stood for and what he himself accomplished were worthy of a prominent place in the history of that family. While occasionally the possession of distinguished forebears seems to discourage initiative in some of the younger members of a family, nevertheless in other instances it appears to act as a definite stimulant. This latter was probably true in Dr. Warren's case. With such a thought in his mind it is easy to see how he dreamed dreams, and how he later experienced what must have given him the keenest pleasure, not only in seeing his dreams realized, but in possessing the knowledge that he had

done his full share in changing them into actual being. And yet modesty was a marked characteristic of Dr. Warren, for his thoughts seemed to be directed principally toward what there yet remained for him to do, rather than toward what he had already done.

One cannot close this short sketch without reference to Dr. Warren's attractive personality which carried with it a suggestion of the old school. Although so often deeply engrossed in serious thoughts for the betterment of one medical interest, or another, he possessed a genuine gaiety of spirits, was a prince of good company, and was beloved by all who knew him.

In recognition of his notable services there was placed, after his death, in the Warren Museum at the Harvard Medical School, a marble bust of him by the sculptor, Paramino. There it may be seen—a fitting tribute to his memory—in the honorable company of his distinguished ancestors!

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